

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

SEPARABLE BOWL FORMING CARTON

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] None.

5 STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] None.

REFERENCE TO A "SEQUENCE LISTING"

[0003] Not applicable.

10 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention relates to a carton for food products and a blank for forming such carton, wherein the carton can encompass an inner sealed food packet and can be separated to form individual bowls for receiving
15 the contents of the inner food packet for an aesthetically pleasing presentation to consumers.

[0005]

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

[0006] There are numerous containers for packaging food products. These
20 packages typically include an outer cardboard or paperboard container, with a food product within, or alternatively employ an inner sealed flexible bag. Typically, in use, the consumer opens the outer paperboard container and then the sealed inner container to access the food product. If the food product is not consumed in one sitting, the inner flexible bag is typically folded over to provide

some sealing function of the retained food product and the cardboard container is closed.

5 **[0007]** The need exists for a carton which can provide sufficient cushioning and packaging functions to allow transport of the food product, while still providing an aesthetically pleasing presentation of the food product to the consumer. The need also exists for a carton that can allow shipment of different food products within a common sealed container, wherein the different food products can be separately presented without mixing.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 **[0008]** The present invention provides a separable bowl forming carton, wherein the carton is separable into two separate bowls. In one configuration, the carton is sized to enclose at least one inner packet, and preferably two inner packets. The outer surface of the separable bowl forming carton includes promotional labeling and description of the food product, to allow the consumer
15 to make an informed purchasing decision.

[0009] In use, the consumer opens and divides the carton into separate halves, wherein each half is deformable into a multifaceted bowl, such that the consumer can empty each of the retained inner packets into a respective bowl for presentation and consumption. In one configuration, the periphery of the
20 bowl has more facets than the number of side walls of the separable carton.

[0010] The present separable bowl forming carton can be constructed from a unitary blank having four sections, each section including a top closure flap, an upper wall panel, a lower wall panel and a bottom closure flap, wherein the upper and lower wall panels are separable by a tear strip, and at least one of
25 the wall panels includes bowl forming fold lines.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING(S)

[0011] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a sealed separable bowl forming carton.

5 [0012] Figure 2 is a partial cut away view showing an inner packet within the separable bowl forming carton.

[0013] Figure 3 is a top plan view of the sealed carton.

[0014] Figure 4 is a top plan view of a resulting bowl.

[0015] Figure 5 is a plan view of the separable bowl forming carton blank.

10 [0016] Figure 6 is a perspective view of an alternative separable bowl forming carton.

[0017] Figure 7 is a top plan view of a blank for forming the separable bowl forming carton of Figure 6.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

15 [0018] Referring to Figure 1, the present separable bowl forming carton 10 has closed, and preferably sealed top, bottom and side walls. As seen in Figures 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7, a tear strip 20 extends across each of the side walls, at a generally median height of the carton 10.

20 [0019] Although the present configuration is set forth in terms of having four side walls, it is understood the separable bowl forming carton can have three, five or more side walls. Specifically, as seen in Figure 6 and 7, the separable bowl forming carton 10 can have six side walls.

25 [0020] As seen in Figure 2, at least one inner packet 12 of food product is retained within the separable bowl forming carton 10. The inner packet 12 can be any variety of known package constructions including flexible laminates, bags or even paperboard.

[0021] Referring to Figures 3 and 4, the sealed carton 10 is shown having four side walls (Figure 3) and the resulting bowl (Figure 4) has an opening (or periphery) defined by six linear segments. Depending upon the configuration of side walls, the resulting bowl can have eight wall facets defining a bowl opening
5 having six linear segments S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6.

[0022] Referring to Figure 5, a blank 40 is shown for forming the separable bowl forming carton 10. The blank 40 includes four sections 50, 60, 70, and 80, wherein each section includes a top closure flap 51, 61, 71, and 81, respectively, an upper wall panel 52, 62, 72, and 82 respectively, a lower wall
10 panel 53, 63, 73 and 83 respectively and a bottom closure flap 59, 64, 74, 84, respectively.

[0023] As seen in Figure 5, the first section 50 defines the top closure flap 51, foldably connected to an upper left wall panel 52 which is separably connected to a lower left wall panel 53 foldably connected to the bottom closure
15 flap 54.

[0024] The second section 60 includes the top closure flap 61, an upper front wall panel 62 foldably connected to the top closure flap. A lower front wall panel 63 separably connected to the upper front wall panel 62, and the bottom closure flap 54 foldably connected to the lower front wall panel. The upper front
20 wall panel 62 and the lower front wall panel 63 are foldably connected to an edge of the upper left wall panel 52 and the lower left wall panel 53. Further, at least one and preferably both of the upper front wall panel 62 and the lower front wall panel 63 include bowl forming fold lines 66 which extend from a corner of the respective front wall panel to intersect at an apex adjacent to the
25 tear strip 20. Depending upon the desired resulting configuration, the bowl forming fold lines 66 can terminate at or proximal to the tear strip 20. The bowl forming fold lines 66 can intersect, or merely converge at or adjacent the tear strip 20.

[0025] The third section 70 is typically similar to the first section 50 and defines the top closure flap 71, an upper right wall panel 72 foldably connected to the top closure flap, a bottom right wall panel 73 separably connected to the upper right wall panel, and a bottom closure flap 74 foldably connected to the bottom right wall panel. The upper right wall panel 72 and the bottom right wall panel 73 are foldably connected to an edge of the upper front wall panel 62 and the lower front wall panel 63, respectively.

[0026] The fourth section 80 defines the top closure flap 81, an upper rear wall panel 82 foldably connected to the closure flap, a lower rear wall panel 83 separably connected to the upper rear wall panel, and the bottom closure flap 84 foldably connected to the lower rear wall panel.

[0027] Similar to the upper front wall panel 62 and lower front wall panel 63, the upper rear wall panel 82 and lower rear wall panel 83 include bowl forming fold lines 66 which intersect at an apex adjacent to or at the tear strip.

[0028] The upper rear wall panel 82 and the lower rear wall panel 83 are foldably connected to the upper right wall panel 72 and lower right wall panel 73 respectively.

[0029] A joining or glue flap 90 extends from the upper rear wall panel and the lower rear wall panel.

[0030] The tear strip 20 extends between each of the upper and lower wall panels of the four sections (50, 60, 70 and 80). The tear strip 20 can include any of a variety of configurations including pull tabs, tear cords, perforations, reverse half cuts as well as score lines with a releasable adhesive.

[0031] Although the tear strip 20 is shown as bisecting each of the sections 50, 60, 70 and 80 to define equal size, upper and lower wall panels, it is understood the tear strip could be located to define different size upper and lower wall panels.

5 **[0032]** Further, although the blank 40 is set forth as having four sections 50, 60, 70 and 80 and hence four side walls, it is understood fewer side walls could be employed thereby providing for example a triangular footprint package, or more wall panels could be employed to define a pentagon, hexagon or a higher sided footprint carton.

[0033] The blank 40 can be formed from any of a variety of paperboard type materials as well as plastic or thermoplastic laminates or coated board such as a polycoated paperboard.

10 **[0034]** In formation of the separable bowl forming carton 10, the blank 40 is die cut and the fold lines formed.

[0035] Subsequently, each of the upper and lower wall panels of a given section 50, 60, 70 and 80 are folded relative to the adjacent upper and lower wall panels and the glue flap 90 is adhered to an inside portion of a free edge of the first section (in this configuration, the upper and lower left wall panels).

15 **[0036]** Either the top or bottom closure flaps are folded inward and sealed to form a substantially sealed enclosed end of the carton having four side walls. While it is believed that a sealed end will provide greater consumer satisfaction, it is understood the closure flaps can be merely tucked, without providing a sealed container.

20 **[0037]** The inner packets 12 are then disposed within the open-ended carton and the remaining of the top or bottom closure flaps are then folded and sealed to provide a sealed separable bowl forming carton 10.

25 **[0038]** In use, the consumer acquires the sealed separable bowl forming carton 10, which contains the two inner packets 12. The consumer then separates the upper and lower halves along the tear strip 20 to form two separate closed-end containers. The end walls can then be urged towards each other, thereby causing the sidewalls to flex along the bowl forming fold lines 60 and form a bowl periphery having a greater number of facets than the

number of side walls in the sealed separable bowl forming carton. In the configuration shown, flexing of the left and right walls towards each other provides a bowl opening defined by six linear segments as seen in Figure 4.

5 The bowl forming fold lines 66 transform a single wall panel into three non-coplanar wall facets to provide two linear segments of the periphery of the bowl opening. Thus, in the configuration shown, the separated carton initially provides a “pre-bowl” having a bottom and four side walls having an opening defined by four linear segments. Upon folding along the bowl forming fold lines 66, additional facets are formed in the respective walls. Thus, the periphery of
10 the resulting bowl has more facets than the number of side walls of the original packaging.

[0039] The consumer then opens the inner packet 12 and pours the food product of the inner packet to the shaped bowl, wherein the shaped bowl and be presented for consumption of the food product.

15 **[0040]** The blank 40 thus forms a sealed carton 10 having four side walls, with a sealed top and bottom, wherein at least one of the side walls (and preferably two opposing side walls) include at least two bowl forming fold lines 66. Actuation of the tear strip 20 separates the original carton 10 into two separate open top, closed bottom receptacles. Upon folding the side walls
20 along the bowl forming fold lines 66, the resulting bowl has a periphery defined by a number of facets or segments that is greater than the number of side walls of the originally sealed carton.

[0041] While the invention has been described in conjunction with specific embodiments thereof, it is evident that many alternatives, modifications, and
25 variations will be apparent to those skilled in the art in light of the foregoing description. Accordingly, the present invention is intended to embrace all such alternatives, modifications, and variations as fall within the spirit and broad scope of the appended claims.